IREX - Advancing MOOCs for Development Initiative (AMDI)

Reporting for Quarter Three – *August 1 to October 31, 2015*

Acronyms & Abbreviations:

AMDI	Advancing MOOCs for Development Initiative
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
SME	Small-Medium Enterprises
TASCHA	Technology and Social Changes Group, University of Washington
UMB	Manuela Beltran University
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary:

Activities in Quarter 3 of the Advancing MOOCs for Development Initiative (AMDI) centered around finalizing the Baseline Analytics report, launching the MOOC user and non-user surveys, and finalizing qualitative research instruments; conducting outreach activities at various venues globally; and strengthening IREX's partnerships through the MOOC Expert Committee.

Narrative:

Deliverable – CourseTalk Website Baseline Analytics Report

IREX finalized the CourseTalk Website Baseline Analytics Report in Quarter 3. The aim of the *CourseTalk Website Data Analytics Report* was to provide a baseline analysis of the CourseTalk user ecosystem. The report offers a comprehensive look at the demographic composition of CourseTalk's registered users as gleaned from website analytics, narratives they have shared through course reviews, and the behavior they exhibit when browsing on the CourseTalk website.

The objectives of the report include key search terms related to workforce development issues in emerging economies. TASCHA mapped the geographic and demographic sphere of CourseTalk users, researching the CourseTalk database of nearly 90,000 total course reviews (as of May 2015) and conducting an analysis of keyword searches and reviews by subject matter. The report provides a succinct list of recommendations that might potentially improve website analytic data.

The report, which has been submitted to USAID, contains four sections:

*Researchers interview a MOOC user in Colombia*

- The **first** part describes the demographic nature of CourseTalk users in terms of their gender, age, employment status, and geographical location when available. This section serves as the foundation for understanding user behavior and participation in the analysis of course reviews presented in the rest of the report.
- The **second** part of the report elaborates on three techniques to gauge narratives of employability, workforce development, MOOC learning features, and CourseTalk mentions in almost 90,000 reviews that CourseTalk made available for this research. The analysis elaborates on the potential of each technique to understand CourseTalk user behavior through the lens of the review narrative and presents the different findings, as well as the pros and cons of applying each of the three techniques in review analysis.
- The **third** part of the report takes a closer look how users search by keyword, outlining the trends, main keywords searched in the timeframe of the available data, and the distribution of search keywords in different geographical regions.
- The **fourth** and final part presents a set of recommendations for CourseTalk and provides some guidelines for AMDI's future research and communications strategy.

Based on findings and identified trends, the report provides recommendations to improve CourseTalk's ability to reach MOOC users in developing economies. For example, CourseTalk should prioritize reviewer engagement to foster a sense of community; CourseTalk should increase integration with social media; and CourseTalk should enhance its data analytics capabilities to assess user engagement data across core activities by key user groups.

In addition to the CourseTalk Baseline Website Analytics report, IREX and TASCHA finalized the AMDI user and non-user surveys, conducted testing, prepared the data collection platform for official launch, and drafted a survey analysis framework to guide use of survey data. The surveys were launched on September 2nd in both Spanish and English. Originally intended to be open until mid-October, the team has decided to keep the survey open until December 1st due to low response numbers in select target countries, specifically South Africa (see challenges section for more details). As of November 6th, the survey has the following response rate and respondent demographics.
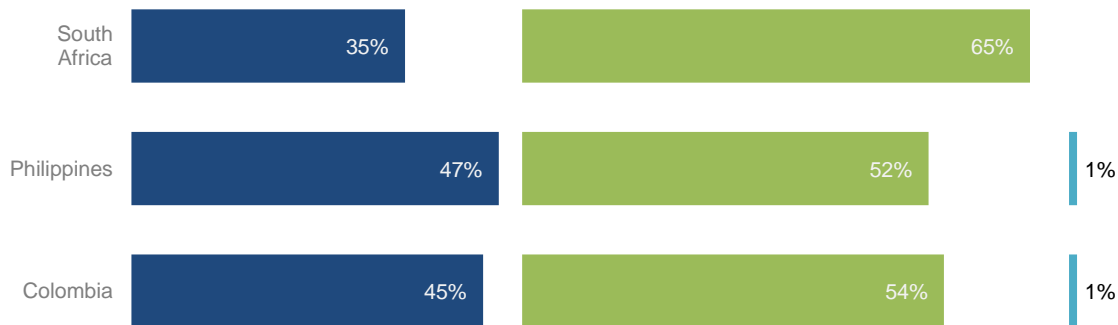
Survey Respondents
MOOC users and potential users by country.

	Colombia	Philippines	South Africa
MOOC users	253	561	72
potential users	297	681	607
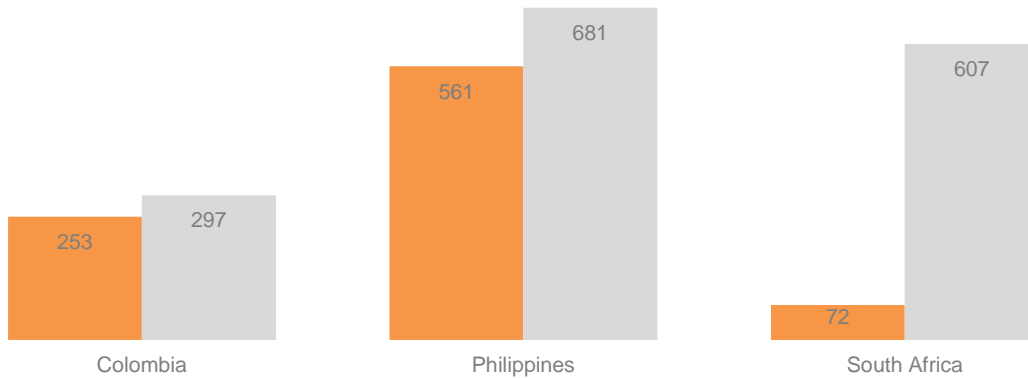
MOOC User Survey Respondents
Identifing as male, female, or other.

	male	female	other
South Africa	35%	65%	
Philippines	47%	52%	1%
Colombia	45%	54%	1%

Finally, IREX, TASCHA, and local research partners worked together to finalize the Key Informant Interview guides for government stakeholders, higher education officials, and top industry employers. The teams also worked together to finalize potential key informants in each country and prepared the local research partners for MOOC User Focus Group activities. Key Informant Interviews will be conducted in November and December of quarter 4.

Outreach and Communications

IREX engaged with key stakeholders and MOOC users during a number of events in Quarter 3 to increase AMDI's visibility and raise awareness of MOOCs in non-traditional user groups at international events as well as conferences in Washington DC.

At the Technology Salon in Bangkok, Thailand on August 17, IREX and FHI 360 led a discussion exploring the topic: Can Technology Improve Education in Asia? The salon brought together more than 25 professionals in education and technology to separate the hype from the promise in ICT4Edu. AMDI's director Scott Andersen and Steven Ehrenberg, Associate Director from FHI 360 led the discussions. Participants shared their experience in the field and then debated what current trends in technology for education indicate about the future of educational technology. Highlights of the discussion included the conclusion that mobile learning's

AMDI Director Scott Andersen discusses MOOCs at America House in Kviv. Ukraine

moment has arrived. Given the development of mobile devices over the past five years, from being SMS based and very limited to today's applications that can be accessed by the many smartphone owners, applications are now a legitimate tool for delivering educational content – and content that can be interactive and responsive. Participants discussed what role development should play in harnessing this for systematic education initiatives. In addition, to discussing the technology itself, online environments provide new potential for communities of practice to gather and learn from each other. Educators and other educational professionals who may have been previously isolated from each other can now much more easily and conveniently connect and exchange knowledge. This facilitates the dissemination of new ideas and tightens professional networks, making them more useful and rewarding to participants.

At America House Kyiv, Ukraine on September 10, IREX lead a presentation for 35 young Ukrainian students and teachers discussing developing trends in e-learning, such as mini-MOOCs, and the potential of new e-learning models. Mini-MOOCs are short courses, delivered on computers or mobile devices can help users develop specific discrete skills making them more competitive for employment. The evens also centered on the trend towards blended learning and it's benefits.

IREX participated in the mEducation Alliance Symposium in Washington DC in October, sharing the program's objectives around learning about how mobiles might be used for MOOC participation, and in turn how MOOC course content is slowly becoming more mobile-friendly. The presentation also showcased AMDI's use of tablets and the Open Data Kit platform in face-to-face survey enumeration, reducing the need for human data entry and cleaning and facilitating cloud-based data access.

On October 24, IREX presented to to the departments of political science, law, English language, and administrators at KIMEP University in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where the faculty and administration are in the process of creating a MOOC- e-education outreach initiative. The participants discussed strategies for building a MOOC program, different techniques and tools that e-learning has to offer, and debated the degree to which MOOCs disrupt traditional higher education institutions like universities. Originally, MOOCs were seen as a way to avoid the crushing student debt that plagues students of higher education in the US. But in developing countries, MOOCs are in a different environment and have a different purpose. The will be most useful as supplementary tools – helping students gain exposure to content that may have been unavailable to them because of lack of access to tutors or high-quality teachers – and therefore help students become more competitive for universities and jobs.

Finally, with support from CourseTalk, IREX launched Google Ads through the Google Grants and AdWords program to raise awareness about MOOCs, online learning, and the AMDI survey. Several campaigns specifically target the three countries and include keywords such as "distance learning" "e-learning course" and "college online". More information on the performance of these ads can be found in the monitoring and evaluation section.

Partnerships

IREX continues to develop partnerships through the newly created MOOC Expert Committee (MEC). The 'Committee' is a rallying platform from different industries, organizations and countries working to advance the development of social learning through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Among the key members of the MEC are USAID, IREX, CourseTalk, Telefonica, the University of Washington's TASCHA program, and the Inter-American Investment Corporation. The Committee aims to identify future trends, promote technology, and eventually advise policy makers by supporting market-based solutions for higher education needs. The MEC recently launched their first publication, CourseTalk's report on What Reviews Divulge About On-Line Education.

Challenges or issues of concern:
While research activities remain on track, IREX and TASCHA found that some of the expected CourseTalk data for web analytics was not available. This included demographic information such as CourseTalk registered users' gender, location, and age. Therefore, TASCHA conducted an analysis of the reviews left on the site for the baseline analytics report. During workplanning in November, IREX and CourseTalk will work together to discuss what kinds of analytics data CourseTalk can start tracking to inform our endline assessment.

Another unexpected challenge has been obtaining the necessary number of responses in South Africa from MOOCs users. This may be due to student protests at universities over the past semester due to increased student fees in South Africa. IREX, TASCHA, and Rhodes University continue to monitor this situation carefully. While the it prevents safe face-to-face enumeration on university campuses, IREX and Rhodes have worked together to identify other outreach channels to further distribute the online survey.

Monitoring and Evaluation:
As awareness raising activities have progressed, the CourseTalk webpage has seen a decreased bounce rate, especially from the AMDI target countres. The attached spreadsheet includes more information about AMDI indicators.

In addition to the performance indicators, IREX has also tracked the performance of its Google Ads. To raise awareness about MOOCs, online learning, and the AMDI MOOCs Survey, IREX has launched campaigns to target the three program countries. Each campaign

Bounce Rate of CourseTalk site visitors

Overall, in the **Philippines**, **Colombia**, and **South Africa**.
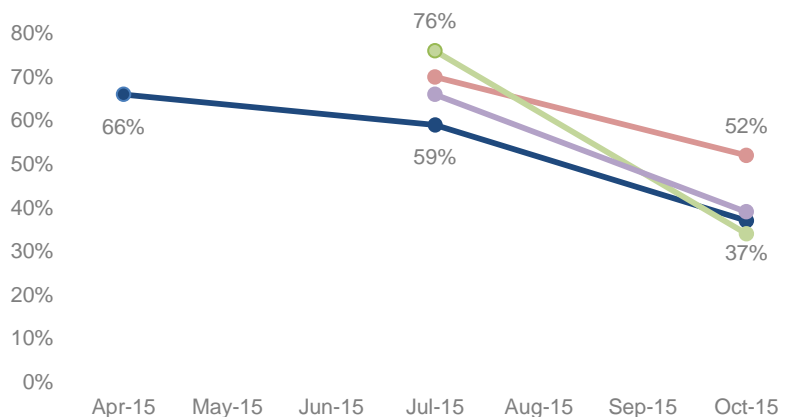
includes keywords that were carefully selected in coordination with our local research partners on the ground to ensure cultural relevance. For example, in Colombia we optimized the campaigns by using Spanish keywords for virtual education, online courses and distant learning. Currently, approximately 9,512 people have clicked on the ads to promote the use and awareness of MOOCs and campaigns have left close to 700,000 impressions.
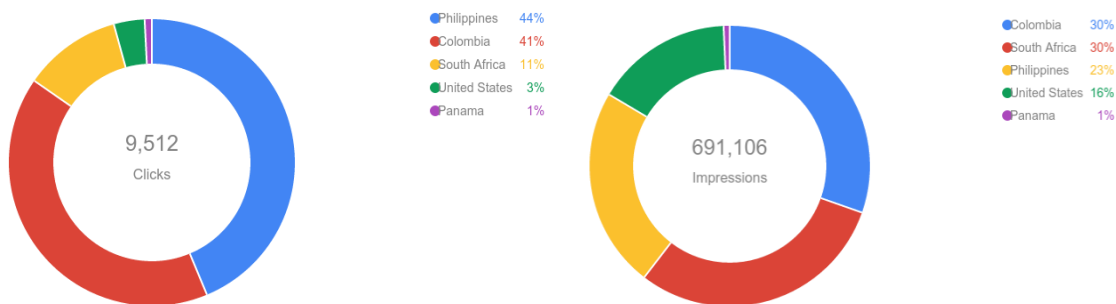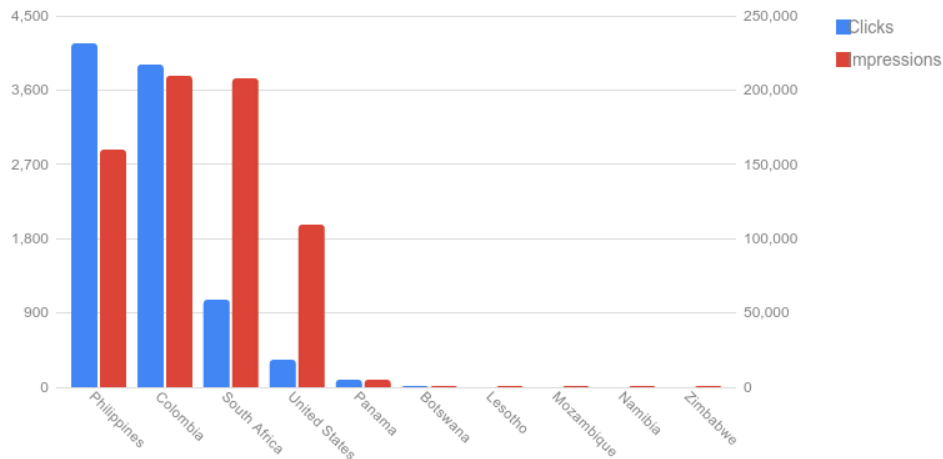
Issues for USAID action/attention:
None at this time

Lessons learned/best practices:
External interest in AMDI: After finalizing the "Get Involved" google form on the AMDI landing page, AMDI has received several requests for information. Several of these from Telefonica and the ICC have led to the formation of the MOOC Expert Committee. It is clear that there is strong interest from external stakeholders to learn more about the potential of MOOCs, share data, and collaborate in other ways. AMDI should keep this in mind moving forward with the awareness raising and marketing campaigns.

Upcoming activities:
- Presentation at the USAID Global Education Summit on November 3rd
- IREX and CourseTalk Workplanning meeting in San Francisco on November 17-18th

- Attendance of Colombia ICT and Disabilities conference 'Accessible America', November 5 to 7
- IREX will speak at the **Asia Summit on Flexible Learning Strategies for Out-of-School Children** that will be held 24-26 February 2016 and which will be sponsored by UNESCO in Bangkok, Thailand.
- Close-out of MOOC survey and information gathering process in Colombia, Philippines and South Africa for MOOC User Baseline Survey.